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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 SKOPJE 000896

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR EUR/SCE (GMCCLUNG & CHOH), OSD FOR DASD FATA, JCS
FOR COL SHIELDS, WHITE HOUSE FOR TOBY BRADLEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA'S NATO BID: "SPRINT TO THE FINISH LINE"
(OR YOU MAY NOT GET THERE AT ALL)

REF: A. 2006 SKOPJE 251

[1](#)B. SKOPJE 533

[1](#)C. SKOPJE 880

[1](#)D. SKOPJE 872

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

[1](#)1. (SBU) On November 8, USNATO Ambassador Nuland and a U.S. interagency team told Macedonia's top officials, MPs, and opposition leaders that Macedonia must accelerate reform efforts in the next three months or risk not receiving a membership invitation at the 2008 NATO summit. In addition to continued progress on Framework Agreement implementation, she pressed for faster implementation of the May 29 agreement and judicial and police reforms, and underscored the importance of improving management of the name issue with Greece.

[1](#)2. (C) GOM leaders pledged to redouble efforts to implement those reforms. In a 40-minute one-on-one, a sober PM Gruevski pledged to move key legislation before the new year, and to engage in good faith on the UN Nimetz process on Macedonia's name. President Crvenkovski agreed the pace of reforms had faltered, but said Macedonia worked best under pressure. All government leaders agreed that Macedonia needs to engage in good faith in the UN talks on the name and pledged to pursue confidence-building steps with Athens, but ruled out any change in the constitutional name, even if that meant giving up a NATO invitation. Members of parliament highlighted the importance for regional stability of NATO membership for Macedonia, and opposition leaders suggested they would work constructively with the GOM to fulfill NATO-related tasks. No one on the Macedonian side rejected the U.S. proposed "homework" as unachievable in the time remaining, and all pledged to redouble efforts to get it done.

[1](#)3. (C) Nuland's "tough love" message was viewed here as the "coldest shower" Macedonia has received in years regarding its NATO candidacy. We agree with President Crvenkovski that Macedonians perform best under pressure, however, and will work to help them meet the necessary benchmarks in time for the 2008 Bucharest summit. End summary and comment.

NATO ROADSHOW, ROUND II

¶4. (U) USNATO PermRep Ambassador Nuland led a high-level USG interagency delegation (D/AS for Defense Daniel Fata, NSC NATO Director Toby Bradley, State EUR/SCE Director Chris Hoh, JCS J5 Col. Mark Shields, USNATO Enlargement Officer Thomas Underwood, and Enlargement Officer Matthew Thompson) to Skopje on November 8 to follow-up on her March 2006 "NATO Roadshow" visit (ref A) to press the GOM on NATO membership-related reforms. Ambassador Milovanovic accompanied Ambassador Nuland.

¶5. (SBU) During her meetings in Skopje, Ambassador Nuland delivered the following messages to the President, Prime Minister, Foreign and Defense Ministers, parliamentarians, and the key leaders of the ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian opposition parties:

--Reform progress has slowed over the past year; Macedonia has slipped into third place vis-a-vis its fellow Adriatic Charter members Albania and Croatia;

--You cannot slow down in the final two miles of a marathon if you hope to win it, you must sprint to cross the finish line;

--You must accelerate implementation of the Framework Agreement (FWA) and the May 29 Agreement between governing VMRO and ethnic Albanian opposition DUI; implement essential police, judicial, and other rule of law reforms; and demonstrate "good neighborly" relations with Greece by sitting down in good faith at the negotiating table at the UN to continue negotiations on the name issue in the Nimetz process. If you fail to do these things, you risk losing NATO membership in this round of enlargement; there is no way to tell when the next enlargement round might occur.

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MAY 29 IMPLEMENTATION LAGGING

¶6. (SBU) Responding to Amb Nuland's concerns regarding lagging progress in implementing the FWA and May 29 agreement, FM Milososki said the GOM was working with opposition DUI and SDSM to complete two of the five points in that agreement. In addition, he said, the government would support a social package for the victims of the 2001 conflict.

¶7. (C) In a tete-a-tete with Ambassadors Nuland and Milovanovic, PM Gruevski suggested that he would insert the list of 46 laws requiring a Badinter vote into the draft law on the parliamentary inter-ethnic relations committee which, once passed, would lead to a reconstitution of the inter-ethnic relations committee that would favor the opposition. Ambassador Milovanovic agreed the USG would press both opposition SDSM and DUI not to delay the debate on these issues, which Amb. Nuland later did in separate meetings with them.

¶8. (C) Gruevski also said he would immediately begin implementation of a social package for 2001 conflict victims if DUI would agree to drop its insistence on a law on the former NLA fighters to codify such a package for them. Gruevski was ready to offer jobs to those qualifying for the package, which would also help the government meet its FWA-related equitable representation targets. On the draft language law, he said it would be easier to move forward if opposition SDSM were included in the talks with DUI.

¶9. (C) Admitting that there had been little progress on May 29 implementation, President Crvenkovski told Amb. Nuland there was no justifiable reason for the delay. Macedonians worked better under pressure, however, he said. That might lead to quicker results, especially since there was "no high public price" to pay in moving ahead on the May 29 points.

¶10. (C) In her one-on-one with Gruevski, Amb Nuland said she was disappointed that, since her last visit in June (ref B), the State Judicial Council (SJC) had not been fully completed and there was no positive action on police reform. She stressed that it was essential to complete the SJC, and urged Gruevski to accept the President's latest proposed appointment to the council. She also advised him to get the administrative court and appeals court in Gostivar up and running quickly. The same was true for the selection of local police chiefs to implement the police law, which had to be done in consultation with the opposition.

¶11. (SBU) Gruevski replied that it was not only up to the government to show progress on those issues. The opposition also had to be constructive. FM Milososki told Amb. Nuland that, even though the SJC had not been fully composed, its 14 members already had started working and had approved the appointment of new administrative court judges, which would help unblock the judicial reforms logjam. Gruevski said the government was working to reach consensus with the opposition on passage of the draft law on the public prosecutor, and added that the Ministry of Justice planned to finalize by-laws for implementing the police law by 2008.

THE NAME ISSUE -- HEW TO THE NIMETZ PROCESS

¶12. (C) Both FM Milososki and PM Gruevski said Macedonia would maintain a low-key public approach on the name and would continue to urge Athens to agree to joint confidence building measures. They also stressed, however, that using any name other than the constitutional name for international use was a "red line" for the GOM. PM Gruevski insisted that he would not compromise on the constitutional name, even if that meant giving up a NATO invitation. Amb. Nuland advised the GOM leaders against drawing such red lines, and to work to dispel the public image Macedonia had recently earned as being the side that was unwilling to engage in the Nimetz process.

¶13. (C) Amb. Nuland underscored the importance of being able
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to show some progress in moving toward a solution, which would help remove Greek grounds for vetoing an invitation for Macedonia. The hasty GOM rejection of the Nimetz proposal (ref C) had been a mistake, she said. At the end of the day, there would have to be some sort of compromise between Athens and Skopje; for now, however, it was important to demonstrate good faith efforts to reach an agreement. She asked the Prime Minister to state publicly Macedonia's continued commitment to the Nimetz process (which Gruevski later did in a joint press conference with Amb. Nuland).

¶14. (C) President Crvenkovski underscored the broad political consensus in Macedonia on the constitutional name, but admitted the government's hasty rejection of the Nimetz proposal had undermined Macedonia's position vis-a-vis Greece. He agreed that Macedonia had to complete the concrete political tasks required for NATO membership, which would reduce Greece's latitude for a veto. He pledged that the GOM would take part in the Nimetz talks in New York "with the right intent," but would continue to defend the constitutional name, including for international use.

DEFENSE REFORM, PROTECTION OF CLASSIFIED INFO

¶15. (C) In a separate meeting with the USDEL, the head of the local NATO Liaison Office, BG John Durance (UK), said he had noted a recent slowdown in the pace of reforms in the MOD. Accelerated efforts were needed to improve "business practices" (e.g., financial management, procurement), and overall operational efficiency. In a later joint meeting with FM Milososki and MOD Elenovski, DASD Fata said there were "no show stoppers" on the defense front, but encouraged the government to focus more on the sustainability of

deployed forces, and on ensuring that intelligence sector reform evolves in a transparent manner, along NATO-compatible lines.

¶16. (C) Asked about the government's ability to effectively secure and protect NATO classified information, Durance told Amb. Nuland that he "had no concerns in this area," a point other NATO Liaison Team members have made to us in the recent past.

PARLIAMENTARIANS -- MEMBERSHIP WILL BOLSTER STABILITY

¶17. (SBU) During Amb. Nuland's meeting with governing and opposition parliamentarians, both DPA MP Kadriu and SDSM MP Mitreva (a former foreign minister) noted the positive effect NATO membership would have on regional security, and cited strong public support for membership, at over 90 percent. Mitreva added that it would be a strategic mistake for NATO not to invite Macedonia to become a member. Amb. Nuland replied that NATO would not offer membership if Macedonia was not ready for it.

¶18. (SBU) DUI MP Polozhani told the USDEL that implementation of the May 29 agreement and the FWA would demonstrate Macedonia's commitment to social cohesion and mutual understanding, both of which were key values for NATO members. VMRO's Shambevski insisted there was consensus in Macedonia on "independence, democracy, and multi-ethnic tolerance." He added that, despite the differences with Athens over the name issue, the two sides were able to work together, in the Council of Europe for example, on issues of mutual concern.

OPPOSITION LEADERS -- WILLING TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE

¶19. (C) In her meeting with ethnic opposition DUI President Ahmeti, Amb. Nuland pressed for DUI flexibility on the May 29 agreement. She told him that the USG did not believe that a new law was necessary to codify PM Gruevski's offer of a social package for 2001 conflict victims. Ahmeti did not disagree. He also raised DUI concerns about a recent Constitutional Court decision annulling provisions of the law on use of flags and symbols (ref D), which he said "had destroyed the essence of that law." Amb. Nuland expressed optimism that flexible formulas could be found for local implementation of the court's decision on the flag law, and urged Ahmeti to work with Ambassador Milovanovic and her team on such approaches.

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¶20. (C) Opposition SDSM President Sekerinska said her party had worked with the government on NATO-related reforms, including the recently-passed religious freedom law. She claimed SDSM had welcomed the May 29 agreement, which had brought DUI back to the parliament, but was disappointed that little progress had been made in implementing it. She said progress on the language law would only be possible with the engagement of the international community. Asked if she would accept the seat likely to be vacated by VMRO in order to reconstitute the parliamentary inter-ethnic relations committee, Sekerinska replied affirmatively.

COMMENT: A COLD SHOWER...INVIGORATING AFTER THE INITIAL SHOCK

¶21. (C) Amb. Nuland's private messages to GOM and opposition leaders on Macedonia's NATO membership prospects were described by some contacts as the "coldest shower" the country has received in years. Like all good therapy, the effect should be invigorating after the initial shock. In our follow-up discussions with both government and opposition, it is clear that all parties understood the message that time is short and there is much to be done to get Macedonia's NATO candidacy back into shape. We agree that "Macedonians work best under pressure," and will work with the government and opposition to reinvigorate

Macedonia's NATO candidacy over the next three months.

122. (U) This message was cleared by Amb. Nuland and other members of the USDEL.

MILOVANOVIC